

Report of Community Fund Assessment Panel for Berwickshire Area Partnership Meeting at 6.30pm on Thursday 2nd September

Summary of Process

Introduction to new process

Between December 2020 and March 2021, a Review Sub-group of the Berwickshire Area Partnership (BAP) worked on the design of a new process for considering applications for the Berwickshire Community Fund. The recommendations of the group were agreed at the BAP meeting held on 4th March 2021. One specific recommendation was for:

- the creation of a Sub-Committee of the Area Partnership – the Berwickshire Community Fund Assessment Group - with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently make awards.

At its meeting on 25th March the Council agreed to changes to the Community Fund and proposed that new systems, across the Borders, should come into effect from 1st April 2021. The details of the changes to the Berwickshire process; including constitution, procedures, and the membership and recruitment of the Assessment Panel (AP), have all been the subject of further debate and agreement at BAP meetings in April, May, June and July.

The BAP has agreed that the Chair (or other Member) of the AP shall present the Panel's recommendations, with appropriate supporting paperwork, to the BAP meeting for decision.

Further, since it is recognised that this is a new process and will require bedding in, an annual report shall be provided by the AP with details of its work throughout the first year in order that the BAP can suggest where appropriate modifications may be introduced.

The Chair of the AP and members of the AP will be happy to answer questions related to our recommendations

Description of process

- We met via Teams between 3:30-5.30pm on Thursday 12 August 2021.
- This was our second meeting, our first being a dry run of the process.
- The Assessment Panel members involved were: Keith Dickinson (Chair), Anne McNeil, Andrew Mitchell, Davey Scott, James Anderson (voting members) and Cllrs John Greenwell, Helen Laing, Mark Rowley (non-voting members)
- Our aim throughout has been to assess all applications in a fair, robust and consistent way.
- We fully recognise the need for transparency and all panel members made declarations of interest where appropriate.
- We blind marked all the applications and our individual marks were sent to SBC officers.
- Collected marks were then tabulated and circulated a day before our meeting.
- To be clear, the three SBC councillors, whilst adding to the discussion, neither scored the projects nor took part in the final decision making.
- At the meeting we considered 4 applications. In the case of two of the applications there was a good deal of agreement between the blind marking of panel members. In the other two there was initially a significant difference of opinion.
- This process allowed us to focus our discussions on where the differences lay and helped us explore differences of opinions and move to a greater shared understanding of these differences.
- We considered each application, taking into account:
 - The aims of project 20%
 - The evidence of Need 20%

- The clarity and justification of financial request 10%
- The stated Impact/Outcomes of application 30%
- Our confidence that the project will be delivered 20%
- Following detailed discussion of each application we were able to move relatively smoothly to a consensus on all applications and agreement on all recommendations.
- We did not require to take a vote on any application.
- I should emphasise that we evaluated each application as seen, rather than the applicants as individuals.
- We considered the applications as a collection of applications and made our judgements, and recommendations, in relation to the available funding pot.

Brief Description of Applications Considered

Allanton Village Hall - £3,150

Following the removal of a shed at the neighbouring cottage the retaining wall between the Village Hall and cottage was found to be structurally unsound. Without repair the condition of the wall will continue to deteriorate and compromise the structural integrity of the end wall of the Hall itself. The Hall is the heart of the village and serves in excess of 350 users per year providing opportunities for social interaction, education and participating in local democracy. A grant from Berwickshire Community Fund would contribute to the costs of repairing the wall.

Parent Space - £4,977.61

Parent Space works with parents and carers to enable them to support the emotional development of their child and communication within a family through courses aimed at the different stage of childhood, as well as providing one to one support. A grant from Berwickshire Community Fund would cover the costs of four courses at two schools, training for mental health facilitators and 1:1 initial assessments.

Cockburnspath Allotment Association - £5,000

Cockburnspath Allotment Association have purchased derelict land adjacent to the A1 from Transport Scotland with the view to developing allotments and a community garden. A grant from Berwickshire Community Fund would cover the costs of the purchase and construction of a Polytunnel and the employment of a Garden and Allotment Developer and to support the community development.

Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service (BAVS) - £4,122

Following a piece of work undertaken last year, which engaged with local communities to identify possible solutions to transport issues in Berwickshire, BAVS proposes to run a six-month pilot e-bike scheme to assess the need and demand for e-bikes and how they can fit into the wider transport network. Project would be run in partnership with a Heart for Duns. If successful the project would be expanded. A grant from Berwickshire Community Fund would cover the costs of 2 e-bikes.

Final comments

- We will be seeking to appoint further members to the panel – there are places for up to 3 additional places.
- We will be adding to the guidelines for applicants: e.g., advisory word limits; need for axioms to be defined; need to focus on the information we require in order make a decision.